

How to Empower Your Employees

Encourage creativity: Google is a world leader in terms of innovation and a lot of this comes down to nurturing the creativity of its employees. Google Cafes in each office encourage people from various departments to mix with one another and share ideas, while engineers are given a percentage of their time each week to dedicate to things that interest them and explore their own ideas.

For smaller companies, giving employees a percentage of time to work on their own ideas probably isn't realistic. But what we can do is let our employees know that we'd like them to email us with any ideas they have. Or, if you have an office, you could introduce an ideas box or hold a few gather rounds where people bounce ideas off one another (remember not to shoot down any ideas though, otherwise they won't be forthcoming!).

Be sure to provide regular updates on the ideas that have been put forward, even if it's simply to say that it's not viable at this time. Of course there will be plenty that won't fly for various reasons, but you may get a few gems.

Reward good work. I always intend to praise staff for a job well done, but unfortunately more often than I'd like it gets forgotten about in the day-to-day hectic-ness. This is definitely something I need to work on - truly empowered employees get their confidence from knowing they are doing a good job and even small rewards can make a huge difference

Ask about your employees' skills: you may have employed someone for their customer service skills, but that person may also love writing, or be a whizz on social media. By asking about their interests and skills and allowing them to develop those skills while at work, for example, by writing blog posts or setting up and running your company Twitter account, it can be beneficial for your employees and your business.

Hand out responsibility: This is something I find particularly hard, but it's a necessary part of empowering your team. Start small – delegate some tasks to one of your most trusted members of staff and remember, no interfering! Just because someone does things differently to you it doesn't mean they are wrong.

Be a good leader: Setting a good example to your team is one way to empower them. For my part, I'm trying to be more positive, communicate better with staff and keep them up to date with goings on in the business and setting clear expectations for them.